

Large language models propagate race-based medicine

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Abstract

Large language models (LLMs) are being integrated into healthcare systems; but these models may recapitulate harmful, race-based medicine. The objective of this study is to assess whether four commercially available large language models (LLMs) propagate harmful, inaccurate, race-based content when responding to eight different scenarios that check for race-based medicine or widespread misconceptions around race. Questions were derived from discussions among four physician experts and prior work on race-based medical misconceptions believed by medical trainees. We assessed four large language models with nine different questions that were interrogated five times each with a total of 45 responses per model. All models had examples of perpetuating race-based medicine in their responses. Models were not always consistent in their responses when asked the same question repeatedly. LLMs are being proposed for use in the healthcare setting, with some models already connecting to electronic health record systems. However, this study shows that based on our findings, these LLMs could potentially cause harm by perpetuating debunked, racist ideas.